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AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 1978

In Unity

NEWS AND OPINION JOURNAL

UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

IN GERMANY THEY FIRST CAME FOR THE COMMUNISTS AND I DIDN'T SPEAK UP BECAUSE I WASN'T A COMMUNIST. THEN THEY CAME FOR THE JEWS, AND I DIDN'T SPEAK UP BECAUSE I WASN'T A JEW. THEN THEY CAME FOR THE TRADE UNIONISTS, AND I DIDN'T SPEAK UP BECAUSE I WASN'T A TRADE UNIONIST. THEN THEY CAME FOR THE CATHOLICS, AND I DIDN'T SPEAK UP BECAUSE I WAS A PROTESTANT. THEN THEY CAME FOR ME — AND BY THAT TIME NO ONE WAS LEFT TO SPEAK UP.

Pastor Martin Niemoller

Germany's "Messiah" The Collective Conscience of a Nation

by Donna Wade

From self-proclaimed failure to nationally proclaimed dictator, Adolf Hitler completed his official journey through the Third Reich in 22 years. Though officially complete, the history of Hitler lives on in Germany and in any country where an individual would seek to become the collective conscience of a nation.

Contrary to the popular opinion that Hitler was an atheist, he believed and proclaimed himself a religious leader, "greater than Christ". Often billed as the Redeemer of Germany, Hitler's picture appeared in a 1937 Nuremburg Nazi Party rally over the inscription 'In the beginning was the word.' This belief in his divine mission, to lead the German people from bondage and to reshape Europe, formed the basis of every decision that Hitler made. It was through the completion of this divine plan that he intended to become immortal, replacing Christ as the center of people's worship.

As complex as is the human mind, we cannot always clearly identify cause and effect factors in behavior. However, Walter Langer, author of *The Mind Of Adolf Hitler*, suggests that of predominant influence was Hitler's fear of death and corresponding desire for immortality.

Death was no stranger to the child Adolf, or to his mother who buried two children before his birth and one after. Those who have studied the life of Adolf Hitler emphasized the influence of Frau Anna Hitler as she cared for her surviving but sickly son, communicating to him her fears about his death. Langer further suggests that Hitler's fear of death, and corresponding drive toward immortality, was intensified by a fear of his father, an alcoholic who was often brutal in his treatment of others.

Aware of the deaths of the other children, it was natural for Hitler to speculate about the reasons for his own survival. Was it divine favor? Had he been chosen to live for a special purpose? Was he the messiah for the chosen race? By all evidence these thoughts were not strangers to the mind that fashioned so many of the scars laced across the body of humankind.

Strangely juxtaposed with the grandeur of divine immortality was the reality of failure, dealt with during Hitler's years in Vienna, from 1907 to 1912. Rising from a state of severe depression, Hitler rationalized his failures by attributing them to a sort of divine training program, one which he felt prepared him to assume his rightful place as the savior of his people. Rather than bow to the mounting evidence of things around him that reflected abject failure, confronting his concept of self with contradictory evidence, he set about a deliberate campaign to bring his actions into line with what he thought a new messiah should be. He could not bear the thought that he would die before fulfilling his calling, and drafted a course of action that would insure his immortality, as he was inscribed on the hearts and minds of the people he felt called to "serve".

Hitler's favorite image of Christ was that of an angry Savior, casting the Jews out of the temple.

It was during this time that he allegedly began to be directed in his move toward messiah-ship by a "voice" that counseled him when he was hospitalized after World War I, suffering from hysterical blindness and mutism. Hitler later commented that it was this voice which helped him follow his selected course "with the precision and security of a sleepwalker". He often took on more powerful opponents to test divine providence. Every success attained served to reinforce his belief in his divine calling. He began to believe in his own infallibility, and soon began to draw parallels between himself and Christ. Not a proclaimer of the loving and just Christ, Hitler's favorite image of Christ was the angry Savior clearing the Jewish merchants from the temple. Few people would deny Hitler's genius in the understanding and

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Subscriptions: A $6.00 donation provides a one year subscription by First class mail; a $5.00 donation provides a one year subscription by Third class mail. Individual copies are $.75 each.
Address all correspondence to:
Universal Fellowship Press
POB 5570, Los Angeles, CA 90055

EDITOR'S NOTE:

There were two errors in the story on UFMCC office personnel in the June - July issue.

Frank Zerilli was formerly involved with the Christopher Street West Association, and has no present affiliation with the organization.

Candy Halby was Co-Founder of the Gay Rights Democratic Club, not the California Democratic Council.

This issue includes the first in a series of articles dealing with the rise of Naziism. Future articles will deal with the Nazis and the Christian Church, Genocide, and interviews with gays who survived Nazi death camps.

Included in the next issue will be biographical profiles on the Newly-Licensed Ministers of the UFMCC.

Every MCC group is encouraged to send articles (with pictures, preferably) for publication in *In Unity*. Deadline for the October/November issue is Aug. 30, 1978.

FROM THE FOUNDER AND MODERATOR

July 11, 1978

TO THE LAITY AND CLERGY OF THE UFMCC:

Dear Friend,

I write to you to request your help as we struggle in our fight against oppression, ignorance, fear and bigotry during the coming months. Throughout the history of humankind, forces of evil have tried to turn back the clock of progress in human development, especially in the area of human rights. They now turn their attention to us.

We live in an age when God has given us the wisdom to use our minds to develop technology in the areas of social science, medicine, the arts, and far more. We live in exciting times -- and yet we live in dangerous times, too.

During the last few months in America, we have seen the human rights of individuals whose lifestyles differ from the majority, challenged in elections for the first time in the history of our country. (I can assure you that there will be a spillover into Canada, Australia and Great Britain also). The storm clouds of intolerance have been on the horizon for some time, and are now sweeping toward us.

In May we lost the election in Eugene, Oregon. That election, I think, proves that we can no longer hide our heads in the sand and just hope that we will win. We must do everything in our power to expose hatred for what it is.

California State Senator John V. Briggs, a personal friend of Anita Bryant, has introduced an initiative to appear on the November ballot which, if passed, would bar gay men and women (and non-gay persons who would support simple human rights for us) from working around educational institutions. Not only school teachers, but bus drivers, janitors, cafeteria workers, and anyone employed by a school district, are involved. Unlike the laws previously voted on in Dade County, Florida; Wichita, Kansas; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Eugene, Oregon, this law is designed *to discriminate* against people. If the election in California is lost, and if, after that, we cannot win in the courts, our struggle for equality will be set back at least twenty-five years.

In view of these circumstances I will be increasing my direct efforts to combat these forces of evil at work around us. From July 1 until November 1, I will be traveling throughout the United States helping to educate our citizens, both gay and non-gay, to the ramifications of the growing discriminatory attitudes and actions within our country, and helping to raise the necessary funds to defeat the Briggs initiative in California. Public relations and political professionals have estimated the funds needed at two million dollars.

Please pray for me. Please pray for us. I worry that persecution and unpleasantness lie before us. Of all the organizations working to stop the oppression of gay people, the UFMCC is one of the most visible. We own property; most of the others do not. We also dare to call ourselves by the name of Christ, (because we are Christian), which seems to upset some people who would try to become God themselves, presuming to decide who may use that name, and who may not. In the coming months, yield yourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Read and reread the Word of God. Pray without ceasing. Know that we may lose some of our people who are weak, and who have not shared the vision of our Church's purpose in this world. But whatever happens, do not become afraid. Remember that God's perfect love will cast out all fear. Whatever the outcome of this battle, remember two things: God has called us; and if God be for us, who can be against us?

We are dealing with the salvation of souls, and we are required by the Gospel to preach the good news that ALL may be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. We are doing that -- and that we will continue to do. No matter what the outcome of the legal and legislative battles around us, no one can ever successfully vote to take away our right to worship God.

May the peace of Jesus, the Christ, be with you.

In Christ,

Rev Troy D. Perry

Reverend Troy D. Perry
Moderator, Board of Elders

FROM THE BOARD OF ELDERS

July 11, 1978

TO THE LAITY AND CLERGY OF THE UFMCC:

The Elders, recognizing the ramifications of the mounting discriminatory attitudes and actions within our country, have asked Rev. Perry to devote even more of his time in the coming months to the public proclamation of God's love for ALL people, speaking against the discriminatory laws and practices that seek to deny many the basic freedom to live as whole people created in the image of God. Rev. Perry will be raising funds to be used by the "Concerned Voters of California", a coalition formed to defeat the Briggs Initiative. We want you to understand that none of the money collected for the "Concerned Voters" will be used by the UFMCC, just as no funds from the UFMCC will be used for Rev. Perry's travel and related expenses during this time. The benefits for our Fellowship that result from Rev. Perry's increased public speaking during the months of July through October will not be monetary, but we believe that there will certainly be benefits in the spiritual work that we are called to do.

We are equally sure that there will be some who seek to divide us by convincing some of our people that to speak from this public forum against oppressive legislation is not "spiritual". Some will say that to speak in such a way is to abandon our calling, leaving our "religious" activity and moving into a "political" one. We do not believe that the world can be so easily divided into such categories, just as our ministry can not be so easily categorized and limited.

We affirm that we are called, as a Fellowship, to preach and proclaim God's love for ALL people, regardless of circumstance. We are called to minister to all of God's people, with special outreach to the gay person. If a poor self concept keeps a person from realizing God's love, then part of ministry is helping to raise self concept. If social pressure keeps a person from responding to God's love, then part of ministry is helping to change society's attitudes and pressure. If legislative and legal action is used to oppress persons so that they can not fully realize their potential for living in union with their Creator, then we must exercise our God given abilities to influence that legislative and legal action so that people are unencumbered as they seek to live as God's people. This, too, we affirm as a part of our ministry.

Note that we say, 'a part of our ministry.' We are reminded, as was the apostle Paul, that while we are individually members of the same body, we retain our individuality, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us (Romans 12:4 and following). By affirming a part of our ministry, we do not in any way deny the other parts. By requesting Rev. Perry to give even more of his efforts through his particular talents, we do not in any way deny the other members of our body the right to exercise their own ministry through their particular gifts and talents. Quite the contrary, we urge all members and friends of the UFMCC to develop their spiritual lives to the fullest possible extent so that they may be led in all things by God through the Holy Spirit.

We believe that it is only through the process of individually responding to the leading of God's Spirit that the body of which we are a part will be made ready for the life changing, and yes, even world changing, work to which it is called.

We are not discouraged though we reckon our tasks to be at times difficult. We ask for your prayers, both for Rev. Perry and for each other. We lift you in our prayers and commend you to the One who promised to us all . . . .

Peace Through Jesus, The Christ,
FOR THE BOARD OF ELDERS

Carol S. Cureton

(Rev.) Carol S. Cureton, Clerk

Charges of Abuse and Rape At New Mexico State Prison

Reprinted with permission from *Seers Rio Grande Weekly*, Albuquerque, NM.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This month a class action suit is being filed in US District Court against the Penitentiary of New Mexico. Public Defender William Deaton is representing prisoners John Gibbs and Christopher Lemmond in the case.

The suit challenges the Penitentiary's censorship policy on gay publications; the parole board discrimination against gay people; the refusal to allow gay political, cultural, or religious groups to form within the prison; and, the refusal to allow outside groups of that nature to visit inside.

The suit demands the prison show just cause or initiate changes in the above rules as well as pay $1 million for denial of due process.

The following is Christopher Lemmond's first-hand account of his experiences at the prison in Santa Fe. This account was smuggled to Seers Weekly reporter Katherine Davenport.

In late July of 1976, I was sentenced to the Penitentiary of New Mexico for armed robbery. On the morning of my fifth day here, I was raped and stabbed by five inmates. I made up my mind that I would rather stay locked up in a solitary cell for my whole 10 to 50 year sentence than allow myself to be used as a tool for masturbation by the inmates here.

I was placed in segregation in a six by nine foot cell surrounded by hostile, angry men who were constantly looking for someone on whom to vent their emotions. Because I'm young, gay, and good looking (which is by no means something to brag about in prison) I became their scapegoat.

I'd never encountered blind hate in this vast amount before. The staff tried to persuade me to go to the "protection unit". It was lucky I didn't because in September a man was killed there for trying to keep a 17 year old from being gang raped.

During the next three months I was set on fire, had solid and liquid human waste thrown on me and suffered constant verbal harrassment. I fought from six in the morning until midnight every day of the week.

It was very much a moral thing to me. I've never been able to let an anti-gay remark pass. There is something inside me that will not let me be abused as a gay man. I've refused to be the epitome of the "bus station queer" stereotype that the other inmates expected me to be, which only served to threaten their macho egos.

Breaking my will became a challenge. The fighting became worse. After a hard three months I gave up and requested solitary confinement.

. . . a man was killed there for trying to keep a 17 year old from gang rape . . .

For about two months I lived in the "hole", a tiny cell kept dark all of the time. No one in the hole is allowed mail, books, newspapers, or cigarettes. At 10.30 pm a mattress was given to me and taken away again at 6:00 am. Sometimes the drain in the closet where the mattresses were stored would flood raw sewage, soaking the mattresses and leaving them smelling so foul that I could not sleep on them. Cockroaches woke me by crawling on my face and inside my clothes.

But the worst was the long hours with nothing whatsoever to do. I had lost twenty pounds, but the big change was mental -- I almost didn't know myself. I paced the floor, four steps to the front of the cell, turn, and four steps to the back. I became unable to control my temper. I laughed and cried without reason or control. Finally, I began to fear for my sanity and requested to be let out, knowing I was returning to the same hassles I'd experienced before.

TO PROTECTION

In March of 1977, I was placed in the protection unit. It is 100% overcrowded; two people in a cell the size of a ping-pong table. There isn't enough room to get out of bed. Out of the forty windows in front of my cell, 19 had been broken out and had been for two years. It gets very cold in Santa Fe.

The guards, knowing people in the protection unit fear for their lives, abuse them to an incredible extent. The verbal harrassment by the guards is much worse than anywhere else in the prison, and they violate the prison's policies. I've seen a guard open a cell with the expressed purpose of getting an inmate out to beat up another inmate. Complaints are met with 'Shut up or we'll send you out to the general population', where the inmate could be beaten, stabbed, raped, or killed.

To me, all this was worth going through because in the protection unit everyone was allowed to go outside for an hour every week. I hadn't been outside in almost a year.

But there are many other problems living in protection. The parole board discriminates against protection cases. It is impossible to build a favorable record to show to the parole board due to the lack of psychological treatment, educational programs, or any type of rehabilitation programs.

We are not allowed to have a radio or television. No musical instruments are permitted. We can't have more than six books a year or take correspondence courses. There are no such restrictions on general population. We are not allowed to use the prison library, or view the movies we pay for with the profit

made on the canteen we buy. We are allowed only an eighth of the amount of canteen the general population can buy. These are the same restrictions placed on inmates who have broken major rules such as stabbing someone.

Without psychological treatment, I've no chance of making a parole and I didn't feel I was able to exist under these conditions for the next 25 years. On November 25th I began a non-violent protest in the form of a hunger strike. I was thrown in the hole once again. After eleven days I began to eat because I was unable to get publicity of the situation. The letter I'd sent to the Albuquerque Journal had been intercepted.

I was taken in front of the Segregation Committee on December 13. It reviewed my case and recommended I be returned to the protection unit.

Because of overcrowding in the protection unit, I had to remain in the disciplinary unit until a bed-space was vacant. Again because of overcrowding an inmate from general population was placed in my cell on December 14.

That night I was raped.

It was hours before I was able to get help. I've made up my mind to fight this thing. I'm assisting in the prosecution of the rapist. I'm also taking civil action against the New Mexico Department of Corrections in both state and federal court.

LUCKIER THAN MOST

Unfortunately mine is not a unique story. Actually I've been luckier than most young gay and non-gay men in prison. I've seen what a person looks like after they have been overpowered and sold for a pack of cigarettes again and again until no one would pay. Then they become "house property".

Sexual slavery is common here. Gay men are often put up as money in poker games. They have no control over who their 'owners' are or what is done to them. They are loaned out to friends, beaten and pimped. One man was hung because he 'wasn't tight anymore'. Gangs of inmates known as "booty bandits" line up to batter the insides of a pre-selected victim.

When a person in general population is raped, he can do one of six things:

1) Go to protection

2) Press charges against the rapist(s) (which would eventually lead to the protection unit or death)

3) Become a "kid" or sex slave to one inmate who would then have the power to treat him anyway he feels fit, but would protect him from abuse on a grand scale.

4) Do nothing and become public property.

5) Get a knife and kill his rapist.

6) Get a knife and kill himself.

Incredibly, the prison officials block any effort to remedy this situation. The publicity involved in prosecuting an inmate rapist reflects badly on them. One man told me of his interview by the parole board. his conduct record was discussed for five minutes and his sexuality was discussed for an hour. The parole board then told him; "This prison is heaven for you queers with all these men around. The courts did you a favor by sending you up here. We think you need more time to learn your lesson."

The psychological damage to rape victims is devastating. I've seen people almost catatonic for several days after being raped. The long term effects are often the inability to feel emotions, depersonalization, suspicion of other people's motives in forming friendships, and blind hatred against the system which made the rape possible.

Yet with all this damage no programs are provided to help the prison rape victim cope with his inner feelings. Segregation, added restrictions and punishment are all that are given. Often suicides are the result.

The officials call it "The Homosexual Problem", yet rarely if ever are the rapists gay. The prison officials place the blame on gay people and evidently feel we are being dealt with justly.

In reality it is they who are to blame. At the root of the problem is the overcrowded conditions, the inhuman treatment of all inmates, the lack of education of straight inmates about gay people, the refusal to allow gay people to unite and defend themselves, and the absence of a way for all inmates to express their feelings about their treatment and living conditions.

These feelings manifest themselves in violence and often sexual violence. By fostering hate and violence between inmates, the officials can continue to deal out inhuman treatment to all of us.

This is a life and death situation. As I have written this, one man disembowled himself, and another slit his own throat. I do not know if they are dead or not. Both occurred less than 30 feet from my cell.

United we would force a change in this situation. The officials know this and know they are safe as long as the situation exists. We need help badly inside. Together, with our brothers and sisters on the streets, we can fight this with publicity and protest. With unity inside and out, we will win.

It is worth a 13 cent stamp. Please write in support of my case and in protest of the whole situation:

SEND LETTERS OF PROTEST TO:
Clyde J. Malley, Warden
POB 1059
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Governor Jerry Apodaca
State Capitol Building
Santa Fe, NM 87501

SEND LETTERS OF SUPPORT TO:
Christopher Lemmond
c/o Lambdas de Santa Fe
POB 2622
Santa Fe, NM 87501

REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF INSTITUTIONAL MINISTRY DIRECTOR

THE REV. BOB ARTHUR

Many people erroneously think of the Board of Institutional Ministry as dealing with only prisoners. However, we do have an outreach to many more institutions than prisons. The Rev. Tere Roderick is conducting services in Atascadero State Hospital (for the criminally insane and mentally disordered sex offenders) on a weekly basis, for instance.

One of our newest outreaches has been to the institution of the military. A group of 42 army chaplains were having a workshop on creative ministry in Colorado Springs, CO in May. As one of the outside resources, I was invited to participate. I spoke to them of the need to provide a Christian ministry to those in the army who are gay. I was frequently told during the course of the week that I was the highlight of their conference.

The response was excellent. Everyone agreed that there was a great need to minister to the gays in the army without trying to convert them to heterosexuality or have them discharged. They realistically grappled with the problem of how to spread the word of their availability, and yet keep their homophobic superiors from discovering who their gay clients are.

The general feeling expressed by most of the chaplains was that creativity involves risk. Most were willing to take the risks necessary to get a ministry to gays going, and they felt their prime allegiance had to be to God rather than to human superiors, in order to accomplish this task.

I was thoroughly elated over the events of the week, and request your continued prayers for the success of our ministry to the military. Praise the Lord!

A Music of Liberation!

by Pat Mechem

The Music in MCC is as varied as the congregations in the Fellowship. When I took over as Music Director in MCC Pittsburgh, I took over a program which did not exist and thus had no precedents to fall back on. Thus we had to start from no where - each new thing we attempted was done in a void.

We thought about what a music program should and should not be. We experimented with new music, encouraged people to write original material and started a choir. After a couple of years we have arrived at a few conclusions about music in MCC at Pittsburgh.

1) Music is an important part of the service, but the service per se is what is most vital. Our music must support and enhance the work of the ministerial staff. Music must continue to be closely linked to the service and the Pastor's cooperation is essential.

2) Our church is a revolutionary one. Our music must reflect that spirit. We cannot allow ourselves to settle into the standard works of other churches. We have tried all kinds of music in Pittsburgh, and we feel that as long as music has a spiritual and/or moral message, it can be utilized in a service.

3) As a result, our congregation does not know what to expect on Sunday. We have not let them become complacent about our music. We realize that each person attending a service prefers a particular type of music over others. We also know that differences in taste make pleasing everyone all the time an impossibility. By giving all types of music a chance to be heard, we feel that all persons can be reached.

4) We feel that we are a liberated group of Christians, and we want our music to reflect the exhilaration and commitment to that liberation. We encourage original works, in an attempt to draw upon the amazing amount of talent in our congregation. We want our music to inspire all people, and thus we have attempted to encourage the use of inclusive language in all phases of our music program. How can we genuinely be liberated if we allow sexism to flourish in our churches?

5) We started a choir which was open to anyone who wished to sing. Our numbers have been small, but we have sung in many services, and have always been well received. The highlight of this last season was an Easter Contata arranged by one of the choir members.

6) We have a commitment to excellence in our music. We would not have it any other way. Only our very best is good enough for our God.

Reprinted from *Newwine*, a publication of MCC Pittsburgh.

A Ministry to the Transexual?

by the Rev. Renee Hein

MINISTRY TO TRANSEXUALS?

In August of last year, while attending General Conference in Denver, Colorado, I was encouraged by the Rev. Dick Mickley to write an article dealing with transexuality in general, and as it concerns the ministry of Metropolitan Community Church. Time passed, and with a wealth of pastoral responsibilities awaiting me on my return to Australia, the thought of writing an article was pushed into the background. Then, only a short time ago, someone asked, "Why is it that so many transexuals do not seem to be 'together', and just cannot seem to cope?" That question stimulated me to write this brief explanation of the phenomenon of transexuality.

The transexual person is clinically a male or a female, yet a male or a female with the awareness that she or he has been encased in a body of the wrong gender. In order to obtain help in medical circles and understanding in social situations, the transexual may go through years of hardship—certainly of heartache— and finally arrive nowhere. To those men and women who have accepted their gayness this story may sound very familiar. Gay persons have developed support groups, and have been able to help each other for a number of years, but for the transsexual there has been no help until very recently when, partly do to certain well-known transexuals who have "come out," research into the whole area of transexuality has become fashionable.

In order to obtain this help, the transexual often must run the gamut of clinics, specialists, social workers and an assortment of other professional people—all at no small expense. In the past transexuals have usually had to resort to little, hidden-away, expensive Oriental clinics where the operation was performed with no questions asked and with no real guarantee of success.

But the past is the past, and people still ask the question, "Why can't they cope?" They ask that question about transexuals today. Maybe the answer to that question lies partly in the fact that they, like many gay people, are also disenfranchised. Maybe they, too, need to be told "I love you and I care; God loves you and God cares!"

Perhaps those of us who are transsexuals have it better than the majority of gay people, in the sense that we, at least, are clinically defined and in many areas have clinical acceptance. But that acceptance is no help to us when we are discriminated against. Unlike many gay people, transexuals cannot hide their

"situation," because they must change *physically*. And because of that visible change they experience the condemnation and ridicule of society. When angry theologians point the finger at transexuals and quote Deuteronomy 23:1 [1] they always seem to conveniently forget the implications of the next verse. [2] Surely the transexual, as well as the illegitimate, has a place in the presence of God through the grace of Jesus Christ. Is the body of a transexual any less the temple of the Holy Ghost because he or she dares to change that with which he of she was born? Would we deny blind people the right to see because they were born that way?

There is a need, especially in MCC today, to re-evaluate our thinking on transexuality. Our ministry encompasses much more than homosexuality, racism, sexism, and the other socially-prominent issues. There will be times when it will be difficult for us to define just exactly what our ministry entails concerning the transexual brother or sister, but then, isn't the "who" more important than the "what"? When we see a well-adjusted, healthy, happy transexual, and we understand that this person is a "together" person because of our ministry, then we can thank God that our ministry has been fulfilling. Let us Open our doors and our hearts to our transexual sisters and brothers, and we will be amazed at how far a little love will go – it just may help to keep someone alive.

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1 "He whose testicles are crushed or whose male member is cut off shall not enter the assembly of the Lord."
Deuteronomy 22:1 RSV

2 "No bastard shall enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord."
Deuteronomy 23:2 RSV

NEWS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

The Disciples of Christ

Reprinted with permission from "frying pan", (DEC. 77)
Ruby Takanishi and Louis Knowles, authors.

The Disciples are a unique group of Christians, standing on the border between populist, congregational, down-home evangelical Protestantism and main-line, centralized, liberal, denominational Protestantism. Everyone remembers the "Wars of Reorganization" in the mid-sixities. This struggle ended in the adoption of the "Provisional Design" which called into being a *denomination* where before there had been a loose association of congregations. This seemingly innocuous change in terminology and polity was the occasion for many congregations to depart forever into the realm of the "independents" where congregational polity has absolute supremacy.

Other denominations have to worry about splitting, the Disciples must worry about "crumbling," a congregation here, a congregation there, slipping into independent status. This is why General Minister Kenneth Teegarden became visibly upset when one or two congregations threatened to leave after the votes on homosexuality. He was at times unable to speak from the podium, being overwhelmed by emotion, and on one occasion ran to the floor to plead with a particular Missouri minister to reconsider a decision to withdraw.

Disciples have their strength in the American heartland; Oklahoma, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, Missouri, Texas. They are almost non-existent in New England and New York, and representation on the West Coast is weak. A small but vigorous Black wing of the Disciples movement has endured for decades, organized around several Black colleges and a national "convocation" which occurs every two years. The Black presence in denominational councils breaks through an otherwise stifling homogeneity and serves to keep the church at least somewhat grounded in reality. For many of the whites in the denomination, the General Assembly and some Regional Assemblies may be the only occasions on which they encounter Black people as peers. Their lodges, service clubs, and trade unions are almost universally lily white.

The General Assembly is designed to be the great ingathering of Disciple faithful. It functions as a town meeting magnified 100 times. All Disciples are invited to come, although voting privileges are limited to clergy and two or more representatives of each congregation depending on the size of the church. Any congregation, regional board, or administrative unit can submit a resolution for debate and voting.

Although we really listened in the corridors and in the balconies, we heard very few people talking about the four resolutions dealing with homosexuality, even while they were being debated. Except for conversations which we initiated, the only discussion overheard was that of a woman telling a companion that a son of one of her friends had told his father he thought he was a homosexual. Yet it was clear that the issue was on everyone's mind. On the first day of business, a resolution was brought forward to initiate merger talks with the United Church of Christ. Three different individuals went to the microphones stationed at various levels in the huge arena, and with considerable emotion blurted out: "Point of information. Is it true that the United Church of Christ ordains homosexuals?" They were succesively ruled out of order by the moderator, but their objections were indicators of much deeper feelings which were to emerge later. The UCC resolution passed. It was followed by a proposed condemnation of violence on television. Amendments were proposed to include sex and homosexuality in the condemnation. The amendments lost. This skirmish set the stage for the intense floor discussions which were to take place on Sunday and Monday.

The actions of the General Assembly on the issue of homosexuality can be briefly summarized:

1) Approved a study document, prepared by the national staff, that presents a strong case for accepting homosexuality as a natural part of human sexuality which is not condemned by the Bible. The document is not supposed to represent a denominational "endorsement" of homosexuality.

2) Approved by a two-thirds majority a resolution calling for the passage of local and national legislation to guarantee the civil rights of homosexuals, "while neither approving of nor condemning homosexuality."

3) Rejected by a 60 percent vote a resolution that opposed "homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle open to Christians."

4) Referred to the national leadership for further study a resolution urging those responsible for ordinations to screen

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out homosexuals and to prevent their ordination until their sexual orientation had been corrected.

Debate on all the issues was plagued by enormous tangles of parliamentary procedures. As one can imagine, in an assembly of eight or nine thousand people, there is always *somebody* who has a point of order or a clever idea about how conflict can be avoided by referral to such and such a committee. The system had been set up to give preference to speakers with points of order or procedural motions. Much of the floor debate time was spent worrying about whether motions to refer were in order, bizarre points of order, and similar trivia.

The parliamentary situation was particularly bad during the Sunday afternoon session. This was the time originally set aside for the debate on all resolutions related to homosexuality. The Assembly crowd was at its peak, probably around 10,000. A communion service had been thoughtfully scheduled immediately after to restore unity and heal "wounds." But most of the "wounds" didn't get inflicted until Monday due to the endless procedural wrangles. Not a few of the parliamentary detours were set up by people trying to avoid a showdown by referral of resolutions to various places. These were all ultimately defeated and a showdown did occur with the results as reported.

The Assembly defeated a resolution to make Christians and homosexuals mutually exclusive categories.

Little or no substantive debate occurred on the study document. A better exchange came on Monday morning over the resolution on civil rights for gays.

There is a saying: "I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." This statement summarizes the American doctrine of tolerance and the foundation for "civil rights," as well as revealing the basis for a lot of our militarism. It has been an important statement in preventing religious persecution. The *limits* to tolerance have been the subject of major social struggles. Clearly, most Americans would not defend to the death the right of the Communist Party to say what they want. That is because the C.P. has come to represent total *evil*.

Civil rights resolutions that deal with homosexuality are important because they include the group in question within the picket fence of American tolerance. Such resolutions represent a defense line against the worst forms of official and unofficial violence. Their limitations are also important. Endorsing the civil rights of a group is a safe way of avoiding the more intimate question of actually *hiring* them to be your very own pastors, school teachers, and police officers.

Although there were one or two speakers in favor of retaining sodomy laws, the more sophisticated conservatives avoided attacking the idea of civil rights directly. They zeroed in on the phrase, "while neither approving of nor condemning homosexuality," found in the civil rights resolution. They would have been happier with a phrase such as "while recognizing homosexuality as a sin." The Methodists passed a resolution with this sort of language a few years ago. Happily, the Disciples left the "religious" issue of the nature of homosexuality open while going down firmly on the side of civil rights. The Assembly reinforced this stand by defeating a

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Book Review

by the Rev. Lucia Chappelle

"Born on the Fourth of July" by Ron Kovic
McGraw-Hill, 1976, 208 pages

The Vietnam War Era was a time of cathartic crises for Americans. It is a period many of us would like to safely tuck away. The luxury of forgetfulness has not been afforded to one Ron Kovic.

Ron Kovic grew up as the all-American boy in Massapequa, Long Island. He had the all-American dreams of becoming a baseball star and a war hero. The latter ideal cost him three-quarters of his body: at the age of nineteen, Ron Kovic was paralyzed from the chest down, in Vietnam.

Born on the Fourth of July, Kovic's autobiography, is no "Karen-esque", crippled-boy-makes-good story. His personal reflections parallel the great transformation of consciousness that brought us from the "fabulous fifties" to the "turbulent sixties". Tragically shocked out of his innocent patriotism, Kovic became one of the primary figures of the anti-war movement, only to find that the price of dissent was as high as that of conformity.

This is not a book that one enjoys reading. As much as we say that watching a televised war hardened us to the suffering it produced, Kovic's simple, honest recounting of his experience in Vietnam and back at home is still too horrible to accept passively. I found myself holding the book as far away from my eyes as I could and still read, trying to soften the blows. It is difficult for me, even now, to look directly at the photograph of Kovic on the back of the hardcover edition.

Disturbing as it is, the importance of reviewing and analyzing the Vietnam War Era cannot be underestimated. Any repetition of that part of United States history here, or in any other country, could only be termed criminally negligent. Any person presently involved in unpopular causes can see how easily people reflexively choose sides on complicated issues -- the more automatic the reflex, the more vehement the defense of their choice. In the twinkling of an eye, rational points of view are separated by chasms of irrationality.

The easy way to get around Ron Kovic, of course, would be to attribute his metamorphosis to various psychological quirks: non-acceptance of his physical condition, guilty feelings about not being the perfect John Wayne type Marine, even the popular spoiled, bored, middle-class kid syndrome. To read *Born on the Fourth of July* is to intimately explore a deep wound in another human being, and rationalizations are not hard to think of in such confrontations.

As for me, when I think of Kovic's wound, I think of a line from a poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti:

"I am awaiting retribution for what America did to Tom Sawyer" †

Germany's "messiah": *continued from page 2*

manipulation of human psychology, at least in others. Recognizing the seemingly universal need for "someone to be better than", some suggest that Hitler's anti-semitism was ushered in as the "Jewish merchants" were driven out of the temple. The individual longing to feel "better than", collected and combined by a master of oratory and human understanding, produced a scapegoat for a nation united behind their "divine redeemer".

When faced with choice to modify either self-concept or actions, Hitler certainly changed his actions to be consistent with what he thought a "Redeemer" should be. His new attitude of success brought success with it.

Hitler became Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, forming a coalition government that sought to combine the most powerful of the numerous political factions. It was only by this means that majority support for anyone could be secured. Torn between divine security and human insecurity, Hitler could not be satisfied until his opponents were eliminated, making his party the most powerful in the country. For him, the end certainly justified the means -- for the end was, after all, his "divine mission".

There were many political parties in Germany, so to gain popular support, the Nazi party had to unite the country against a common enemy. To gain seats in the legislature, the Nazis embarked on an anti-Communist campaign. Hitler had been warning President von Hindenburg of impending Communist revolt. When the revolt failed to materialize, the Nazis invented one. On February 24, 1933, Goering's police raided a building, vacated weeks earlier by the Communist Party, but propaganda pamphlets allegedly discovered were announced in an official communique as "documents giving evidence of Marxist revolt".

The reaction of the public and political leaders remained one of skepticism. Something more spectacular was needed to stampede people to the polls.

On February 27, 1933, the Reichstag (equivalent to our Congress) building was arsoned. Nazi leaders immediately announced that the fire marked the beginning of the Marxist revolution. The arson remains technically a mystery (anyone with knowledge of the fire "disappeared" conveniently and quickly), but there is enough evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the Nazis set the fire to further their political aspirations. Hitler knew human nature well — to unite common fears is to unite people in unquestioning loyalty and support. To build in a scapegoat is to free the individual's energy previously spent in laborious, and often painful, self-examination - there is no more need to question right and wrong, for the designated scapegoat is always wrong. Once freed, these energies could be molded by a master of crowd psychology into the mightiest of weapons. On February 28, he convinced the President to sign a law "For the Protection of the People and the State", which suspended sections of the constitution guaranteeing civil liberties. The decree placed restrictions on freedoms of the press, speech, assembly, and association, authorized unlawful searches and seizures, allowed the government to assume complete control when "necessary", and imposed the death penalty for numerous crimes.

In one political move, Hitler gagged his opponents, having the power to arrest them at will. More importantly, he built his power base on the collective fear of the middle and lower socio-economic classes, convincing them that their way of life, their values, and even their children's futures would be threatened if they did not unite in support of their 'Redeemer'. Hitler understood, as did few others, that movement, whether in the field of physics or psychology, follows the path of least resistance. Mass scapegoat-ism provides little resistance indeed when compared to the examination of individual conscience and responsibility.

Germany's last free election during Hitler's lifetime was held on March 5, 1933. On March 23, 1933 the People and the Reich) was passed, stipulating that the power of legislation be taken from the legislature and handed over to the Reich cabinet for four years, that laws adopted by the cabinet would be drafted by the Chancellor and could contradict the constitution. All of this power was vested in self-proclaimed savior/messiah/politician Adolf Hitler, not because the people of Germany were particularly FOR his ideology or programs, but because they were convinced that their way of life would be threatened if they did anything else.

"When the race is no longer overshadowed by the consciousness of its own guilt, then it will find internal peace and external strength to cut down, regardlessly and brutally, the wild shoots, and to pull up the weeds."

— Adolf Hitler

The passage of the Law for the Reconstruction of the Reich on January 30, 1934 completed Hitler's dictatorship. On the first anniversary of his appointment as Chancellor, Hitler had, in effect, assumed total political control of Germany. Hitler, portrayed alternately as the "down home" working class boy espousing modesty and simplicity, and the infallible, incorruptible redeemer leading his chosen people into the security of automatic righteousness, moved quickly across the face of Germany.

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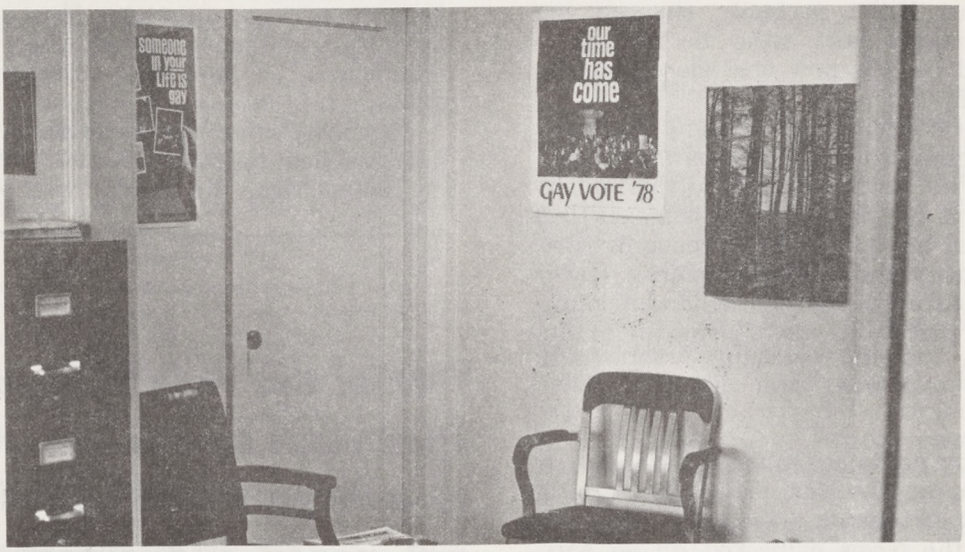
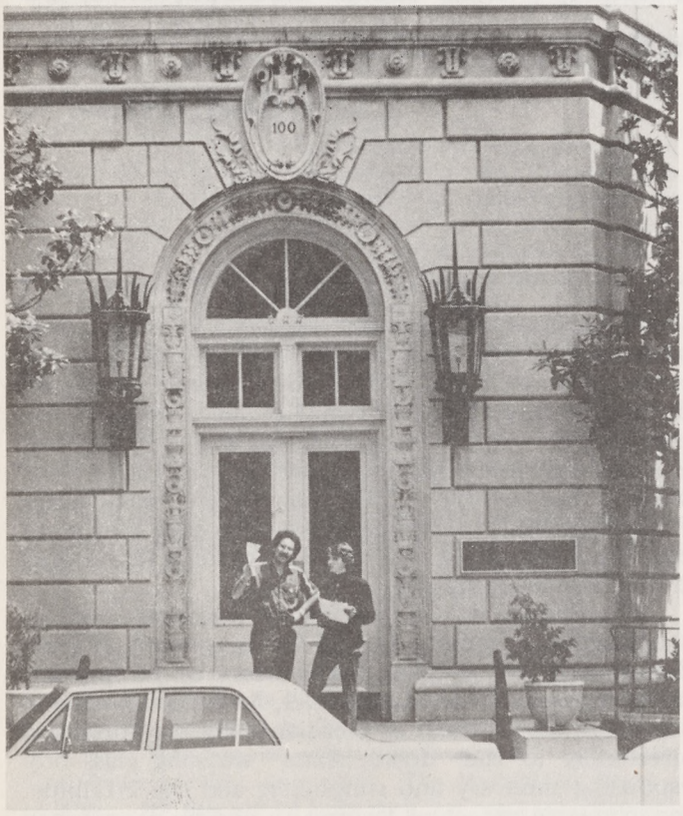
The UFMCC Washington Field Office

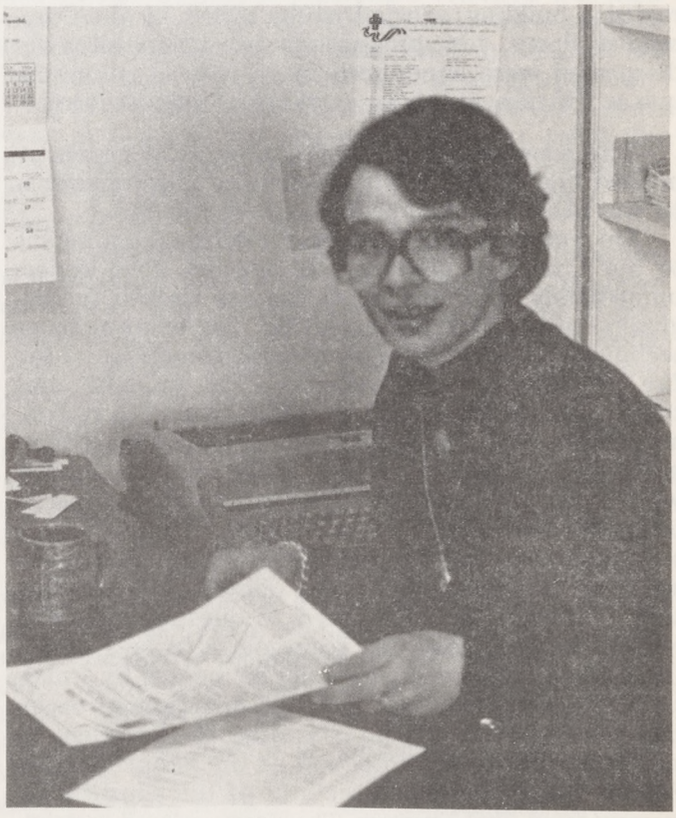
Text by R. Adam DeBaugh
Photos by John Yanson



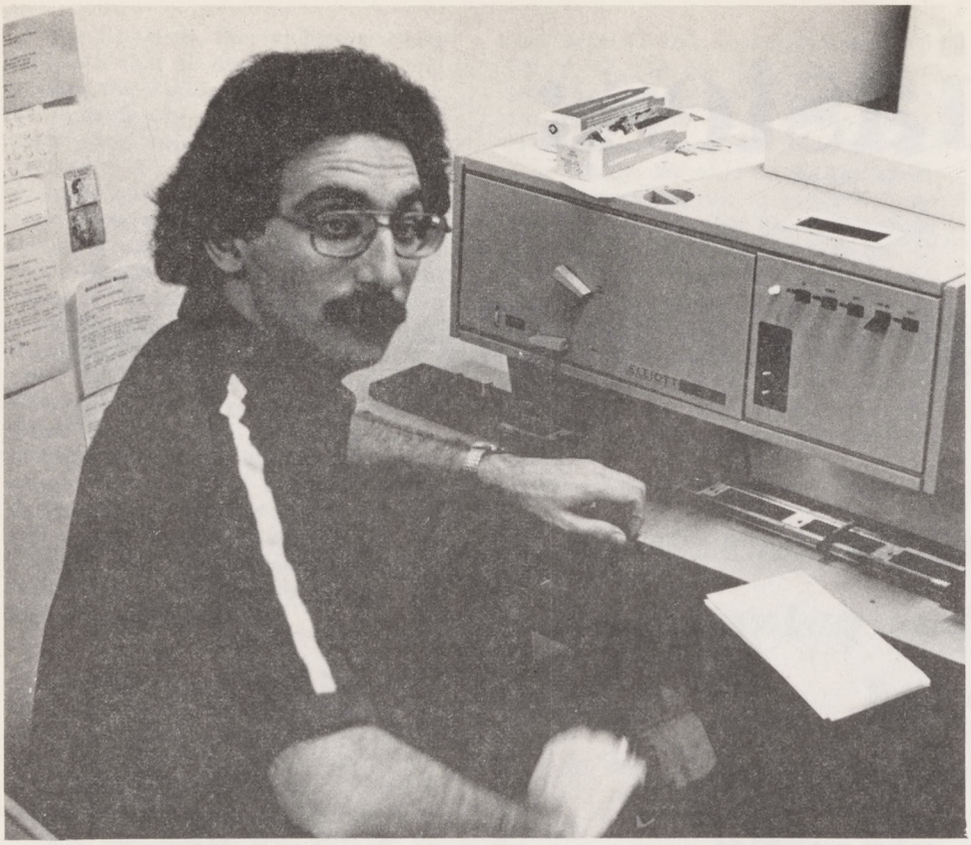
This is the reception area in the UFMCC Washington Field Office. Washington's Gay Activists' Alliance produced the poster on the left for use on Metro buses and subways. The "Our Time Has Come" poster is used in local voter registration drives by the GAA and the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club.



Adam and Ralph leaving the United Methodist Building, where the Washington Field Office is located. Adam is gesturing across the street to the US Capitol, where much of their work is directed, as they plan strategies for the coming day.



Washington Office administrative assistant, Ralph H. Goff, is caught by our photographer while filling orders for copies of *Gays on the Hill* and other Washington Office publications. Ralph started work on May 15, 1978.



Washington Field Office Social Action Director, R. Adam DeBaugh, during an office work day, trying to figure out the new addressograph system. The $5,000 system was given to the Washington Office by members of MCC Cincinnati, and is a used Elliott Addressograph System. DeBaugh and Goff are busy putting the entire mailing list on plates.

The following resources are available through the UFMCC Washington Office, 110 Maryland Ave. NE, Suite 210, Washington, D.C. 20002.

**Gays On The Hill*, subscription for $5 per year (8 issues). For single copies, please send two 15-cent stamps.

**Writing To Congress*, a comprehensive guide to the mechanics of contacting your congressional representatives. Single copies of this pamphlet are available at no cost. Bulk order prices are 5 cents each, or 50 copies for $2, or 100 copies for $3.50.

**Workbook on Christian Social Action* (2nd edition), containing explanations of Christian Social Action resolutions, suggested activities for Christian Social Action Committees, and much more. Available for $1 per copy.

**Gay Rights Protection*, containing an updated list of cities that have gay civil rights legislation and states that have repealed sodomy laws. Single copies available for a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Quantity prices upon request.

**Religious Affiliations of Members of Congress*. These lists, prepared by Office volunteer Patrick G. Miller, are available for $.25 each, except for the lists of Roman Catholics, Episcopals, United Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, which are $.50 each. †

Be! Wise!

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND GENERAL CONFERENCE 1979

AUGUST 13 - 19

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Don't be caught in a last minute budget crunch! Although registration is not yet open, you can start saving now so that you can be a part of the historic 9th General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, celebrating ten years of ministry together!

Room Rates:	Single	$26.00	Double/Twin	$34.00
	Triples	$40.00	Quads	$44.00

Suites are available, $100.00 and up. These rates are net, non-commissionable, and subject to 6% California City tax.

REGISTRATION DATES WILL BE ANNOUNCED—PLAN NOW—ENJOY CONFERENCE—AUGUST 1979

The theme of the Conference is "*For Such A Time As This*", based on Esther 4:14. This is the time for you to join your friends and family from all around the world as the UFMCC gathers to conduct its business and celebrate the joy of new and vital relationships with God. PLAN NOW — Be a part — "FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS" comes only once in a lifetime!

Ecclesiastes:

Meaning In Futile Times

by the Rev. Jeffrey Pulling

[Rev. Pulling is the Dean of Samaritan Theological Institute, the official educational institute of the UFMCC.]

Ecclesiastes is one of a small group of books in the Old Testament which are very unlike the others. In them there is no mention of God acting in the history and people of Israel. There is no indication in them that God speaks through prophets or through any other means. The wisdom books, as they are called, look upon God as a mystery incapable of being understood. The theology set forth in the wisdom literature was not orthodox Judaism at all, but it did represent a significant movement within Judaism four and five centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ.

The time in which this wisdom literature was probably written is the post-exilic period when Israel was trying to restore itself as a nation and as a people. This was a time of great cultural turmoil and religious crisis. The old traditions no longer made sense for many people. The old religious answers and values were no longer adequate. Since this cultural situation is very similar to what is going on in contemporary secular society, it is appropriate that we look at and understand the wisdom literature which came out of this period in Israel's history. There were numerous wisdom writings emerging at this time, several of which have been preserved in the Apocrapha. There were three wisdom writings in the Hebrew canon and thus in the Protestant Bible: Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. Proberbs is a collection of sayings and proverbs. Job is a literary masterpiece about human suffering. But my favorite is Ecclesiastes, which I think contains some very important words for today.

To me, Ecclesiastes is among the most profound and provacative of the books of the Bible. It is often neglected because it does not talk about God's deliverance of Israel, God's covenant with the Hebrew people, God's Law, and God's spokespersons. Instead, Ecclesiastes tries to understand things in a different way. Its author could no longer find meaning for his life in orthodox Judaism. The exile and loss of nationhood jolted his faith in God's care for Israel. For him the truth of God's ways was not to be found there. He had to figure life out for himself.

Ecclesiastes looks at life as it really is. I will never forget the course on wisdom literature that I took in college. The first day of class, the professor said to us that every time he taught this course and came to Ecclesiastes, there was at least one nervous breakdown in the class, and there had even been a couple of suicides. One member of our class also succumbed to a nervous breakdown. It is serious business having the supposed meaning in your life stripped away. I remember that I personally went through real hell in that course trying to reconcile my Christian faith with the issues I met and struggled with. What was going on? This wisdom writer tackled life head on and presented it as he saw it. He raised some issues that most of us prefer to overlook. But he does come out somewhere. I emerged from this course much stronger for it. I present these ideas to you not to test your faith, but to share with you the insights of this writer, in hope that they will help you with your spiritual growth.

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes is a sage named Koheleth, who finds himself estranged or loosed from any traditional religious understanding of himself as an individual or as a member of a people or group. Koheleth does not participate in any community, secular or spiritual. He is alone and has to work out meaning for his life alone. He does not prescribe wisdom or knowledge for his delemma, as did many of his intellectual peers. For Koheleth, all aspects of the human condition and indeed, all aspects of the world, amount to nothing. He has tried all the ways he can think of to find meaning and to obtain pleasure and fulfillment. He tried seeking wisdom and understanding, merry-making, wine, gardens and houses, slaves, livestock, money, culture, sex, hard work, and so on, but there is no real profit in any of them (1:16-2:11). All of these activities are just vanity, emptiness, and striving after wind. Nothing can be preserved or carried over.

It is serious business having the supposed meaning in your life stripped away . . .

For Koheleth, the fundamental fact of life is that all depends on God, and neither the wisdom nor the hard work of humans can change that. This can cause great anguish for the person who prefers to be the master of their own destiny, but death makes this impossible. Everything that a person is will come to an end, and everything that someone has will be of no use. Everything in life comes from God. What a person has or can produce is not dependent upon that person's own worth, but upon the mysterious and incomprehensible will of God. Everything is given or taken away by God. Everything is dependent upon God, but human beings cannot figure out the work of God or determine what God is doing. Yet God still assigns to humans the sore task of striving, with which to busy themselves. Humans seem destined to ceaseless effort without result.

Koheleth does not stop here, however, in his pessimism and despair. There are some positive things in life. Koheleth's answer to the vanity and emptiness of life is to be found in the simple things, such as eating, drinking, companionship, and making love. Joy can be found in the daily round, because everything is beautiful, proper, and right in its own time (3:11). Nothing can be taken out of its time or carried over into another time; it must simply be enjoyed in its own time. One's position is then, just to enjoy what one is doing, whether it be working, eating, etc. The right time for enjoyment comes from God's hand; one cannot bring it about by one's own striving, whether physical or mental. It is very important in Koheleth's thought that God purposes these joys for people. God, who keeps the divine ways hidden from humanity so that seeking to know them is vain, nevertheless extends to humans proper times for the enjoyment of the simple things of life in the company of friends. There is a time and season for everything, as is so beautifully expressed in the reading from the third chapter of Ecclesiastes (3:1-8). This is a passage made famous by the folk song, "Turn, Turn, Turn." When the right or proper time comes, it is imperative to act then. To be consistent with the will of God, one must seize the time.

Seeking wisdom and correct understanding does not work for Koheleth. The more he knows and sees, the more grief and frustration he experiences. It is folly to strive for wisdom, or for material gain, or for religious righteous behavior, because all persons, no matter who they are, and no matter what they possess, meet the same fate -- death (2:12-23) (3:16-21). Both the wise and the foolish, the rich and the poor, and the righteous and the wicked, die. All humans are from dust and all turn to dust again (3:20). Koheleth is so appalled at all the horrible things he sees going on, that he even despairs of living. He says: *"Again I saw all the oppressions that are practiced under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. And I thought that the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive; but better than both is the one who has not yet been, and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun" (4:1-3).* A pretty pessimistic view of life.

are better than one, because they get a better return for their labor. For if they fall, one will help the other up. But woe to those who are alone when they fall and have not another to help them up. And if two lie together, they are warm, but how can one be warm alone? An assailant may overpower someone who is alone, but two can resist attack. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (4:9-12).

For those of us who look at Ecclesiastes as Christians, the message of Koheleth can take on new meaning. We can easily see the futility and frustration of setting up false gods and false centers of meaning, because there is no real power

"Nothing can provide ultimate meaning and satisfaction but God because God IS ultimate meaning."

Koheleth emphasizes the importance of making the most of this life and finding significance in it, because it is here that meaning is to be found. *"I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to enjoy themselves as long as they live. Moreover, when a person can eat and drink and find satisfaction in their work, this is a gift from God"* (3:12-13). Death does put a stop to the joys of living, and thus it is important to live now. The short years that one has may be full of mysteries, vanities, and ironies, but the only meaning available to humans is to rejoice in them.

We humans cannot plan anything or count on anything happening. All our efforts are useless and vain. Only God gives the times for joy; we can only receive them and take advantage of them. Joy is sufficient for us; it makes life bearable. The ways of God may be hidden, but this much of God's will is known: there is nothing better for us than to find joy and satisfaction in our daily round. If we do not find joy in living, we are going against the will of God. Life is very precious to Koheleth, because it is so brief and breath-like. Life is a divine gift; it has no profit, but to seek good in it is a gift. For meaning is not found in the divine life, in the cosmic order, or in the social-political realm, but in intimate relationships with friends, and in spouses sharing in simple things. One of the most beautiful passages in Ecclesiastes for me is: *"Two*

or meaning in them, and they will only let us down. There is no true god but God. When we worship something else, such as knowledge and education, property, pleasure, etc., we are bound to be disappointed because they are all finite, and have their limitations. Nothing can provide ultimate meaning and satisfaction but God, because God IS ultimate meaning. We need not despair with Koheleth, however, that God is so remote and distant that we cannot know anything of God or of God's ways. We can know God because God has revealed God's self in Jesus Christ. In Jesus we can see what God is like and what God's will of love and justice is all about. Like Koheleth, we know that God cannot be contained in any one nation or people. God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Recreator of all humankind. We also know that our intimate relationships with each other are made even fuller when they are centered in God and in God's will.

Let us pray:

O God, there are many things about this life and this world that disturb us and frustrate us. There are many things that we do not understand about you and your ways. Help us to find meaning and direction from what we do know of you and from what we experience of you through your Revealer in this world, Jesus Christ, and through Jesus' continuing presence in this world in his body of believers, and in your Spirit. †

The 1978 San Francisco Gay Pride Parade

by Rick Noll

On Sunday, June 25, Barry and I were in San Francisco to attend the 1978 Gay Freedom Day Parade and rally. Needless to say, it was somewhat overwhelming to participate in the day's events with well over a quarter of a million others! There was a prevailing spirit of unity among the widespread representation of every imaginable organization within, or sympathetic to, the gay community. Everyone was expressing their support in the fight against the Briggs Initiative and Bryant's campaign. It was especially exciting to join our sisters and brothers from various MCC's marching and singing, testifying by our presence the love of God to the thousands who were there. Another friend of mine, a member of the local Evangelicals Concerned group, had brought flyers to distribute. They too were a testimony to the love, care, and concern of God for ALL people.

Unfortunately, I must share with you some things that were very distressing. Many people would not accept the flyers we distributed, making statements such as "Anything to do with God has got to be bad". Others expressed genuine surprise when told that the flyer was by no means anti-gay.

Before joining the MCC group, we stood on the sidelines and observed the first part of the parade. Amidst all the marchers came a group led by a banner which proclaimed, "CRUSH KKKRISTIANITY: DEFEAT HYPOCRISY". As this group passed, they sang a song blatantly ridiculing the Lord, and any people "crazy" enough to believe in God.

After the parade, everyone gathered on the lawn of City Hall for the rally. Following some entertainment, the MC announced that there would be a Prayer of Invocation and stated that while Bryant had called for this to be a day of fasting and prayer, we too could pray. The four of us attending the rally together were delighted.

Unfortunately, it quickly backfired. Introduced to lead the crowd in prayer was a High Priestess. She invoked the name of various gods, including Isis, and praised such "holy cities" as Babylon. She claimed the presence of her gods long before the Jews were ever considered to be a chosen people, and long before the birth of Jesus Christ. Then the crowd was called upon to bring their lives back "home" to these gods. Throughout the prayer, the most painful part was the reaction of many of the people. There was clapping, cheering, and other supportive responses.

> ***A Banner Proclaimed: "Crush Kkkristianity: Defeat Hypocrisy"***

The four of us stopped and prayed together, knowing that the Spirit of God would stay with us. I don't think I could begin to express the real joy of holding on to each other at that time, and feeling the presence of the Lord. We were very thankful knowing that our MCC there was to have a service that evening.

God really filled the people at that service. I believe it was definitely a response to our need for strength. The service centered on unity; unity of spirit, above all, as the Body of Christ. What does that mean to me? It means standing together in strength and support, and learning how to love ourselves, to enable us to really love our neighbors.

It means that we, as a body, must get it together and be ready to confront evil, and spread the genuine Gospel of Jesus Christ. It means moving together to show all of our sisters and brothers the beauty of our God. I believe that only then will we be able to reach the thousands of people who hate us for what we are.

There is hatred toward many of us as lesbians and gay men, but there is more hatred toward us who claim Christ. We who claim Christ are much more of a challenge to the powers of evil. We will continue to fight for our rights as long as we are socially and politically oppressed. And we, just like our early Christian family, will be able to face any oppression by sowing love. Even when our oppressors would offer us no hope and defeat, we all MUST claim victory in Jesus the Christ!

NEWSNOTES

A survey published in the July issue of *Ladies Home Journal* reports that 800 junior and senior high school students selected Anita Bryant and Adolf Hitler as the woman and man who "have done the most damage in the world".

Anita Bryant was also chosen, along with Richard Nixon, as the top two who "make you angriest", according to the survey.

In response to the question "*If you could give a prize for achievement in religion, to which famous person would you give the prize?*", Billy Graham was the top choice. God came in second.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

The Rev. Dr. J. Russell Hale of Lutheran Theological Seminary has completed a study of the reasons people give for not becoming church members.

His 97 page report, entitled "Who Are the Unchurched?" was issued by the Catholic Glenmary Research Center of Cincinnati, in conjunction with several agencies of the Lutheran Church in America.

All but a small minority of the people surveyed affirmed belief in God, for various reasons, avoid religious organizations. The majority of these "outsiders" had once been involved in churches, but had withdrawn.

Hale classified people's views into the following categories:

1) the "anti-institutionalists", people who reject organizational structures for being contrary to the "true religion" and who find fault with church leaders for involvement in secular affairs.

2) The "boxed-in" people, who have quit the church because it is too restrictive, stifling their independence.

3) The "burned-out" people, who are too heavily drained by church involvements.

4) The "cop-outs", people who were never really involved in the church life, and who are apathetic toward it.

5) The "happy hedonists" who choose the momentary pleasures of recreation over church involvement.

6) The "locked out", including those people who have felt rejected or discriminated against by the churches.

7) The "publicans" who see church people as hypocritical, and living a double standard. This was, by far, the largest group.

8) The "scandalized" people, who are disgruntled by the church's lack of unity, and are tired of denominational rivalries.

9) The "true unbelievers" such as atheists.

Germany's "messiah": *continued from page 11*

He began fulfilling promises — unemployment dropped drastically as he put people to work, building new roads and elaborate structures. The German people had been through a devastating depression following World War I, and again in 1929, but now the Fuehrer was changing things. The only thing the masses really cared about was that they were working, putting bread on the table, feeling good about themselves because they knew they were always better than "them". and they knew Hitler was responsible. He aroused the sympathetic concern of the people, portraying himself as the bearer of their burdens and futures. He urged the people to allow him to become the collective conscience of Germany: "When the race is no longer overshadowed by the consciousness of its own guilt, then it will find internal peace and external strength to cut down, regardlessly and brutally, the wild shoots, and to pull up the weeds."

Under the guise of this collective conscience, the wild shoots were cut down, the weeds were pulled, and the world witnessed one of the most brutal elimination campaigns in its history. A campaign born of insecurity, fed by fanaticism, articulated as high ideals, and harvested by the masses seeking safety and security -- masses who too easily abdicated responsibility for self in exchange for the temporary haven of enforced sameness. †

Gay and Christian Conference Held at Kirkridge

by the Rev. David Pelletier

The Gay and Christian Conference, held at the ecumenical retreat center Kirkridge nestled in the mountains of the Appalachian Trail, was a time of struggle and discovery. Struggling over what it means to be gay and Christian; discovering anew the power of the Holy Spirit, as it moves in the lives of ordinary people and brings them to the "realness" of God's love for them. Struggling over claiming 'healing space', and discovering anew the androgynous nature of the new creation in Christ Jesus. It was a time for many people, from many levels, to share and to grow together in Christian love, which transcends denominational barriers, economic resources, and social status. One individual, who had not received the sacrament for seven years, came to the feast of life over the few days together. Miracles do happen!

Among the speakers at the Conference were such notables in the gay community as Fr. John McNeill, author of *The Church and the Homosexual.* Father McNeill shared with us his own personal struggle with the silence imposed upon him by the Vatican, and the 'morality' of his silence in terms of the proclamation of liberation in Christ for gay people.

Malcolm Boyd, author of numerous books including his newest *Take Off The Masks*, shared his joys and frustrations with the people gathered at Kirkridge. Barbara Gittings, lesbian activist, lecturer, and strategist, lectured on gay liberation and strategy, giving the group an awareness and insight which many did not have upon their arrival. Sr. Jeannine Gramick, Co-Director of New Ways Ministry in Mt. Ranier, Maryland, an organization within the mainline church which ministers within the gay community, spoke on the facts and fiction surrounding the gay community. Nancy Krody, from the United Church of Christ Gay Caucus, spoke specifically on the Lesbian Christian Experience.

Dr. James B. Nelson, a professor of Ethics at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, delivered a very insightful and exciting lecture on "A Theology of Human Sexuality as Context for a Theology of Homosexuality." Dr. Nelson is the author of a new book, *Embodiment* (Fortress Press), which is certain to gain some attention in theological circles, approaching the whole topic of human sexuality in a christocentric way.

As important as the lectures, however, was the closeness, and community, of gay people coming from all over the country, to gather together to celebrate their creation! Lives were changed, and no one who attended will ever be the same — but then, the word of God has a way of changing people, especially when the word is *unconditional love*, inclusivity, and hope, for ALL people.

Plan now to attend the Gay and Christian Conference next year! It is time and money well-spent! For further information , write KIRKRIDGE, Bangor, Pennsylvania, 18013.

The UFMCC must be represented at activities like this — local congregations should support and encourage their people, as well as their Pastor, to attend. The number of participants is limited due to space. Plan now. Plan ahead. You will never be the same. The world will never be the same.

The Rev. David Pelletier is a newly-licensed minister of the UFMCC, and is presently serving as the Worship Coordinator for MCC St. Louis, MO. †

The Fellowship Family

NEWS AND NOTES OF MCC PEOPLE AND EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD

ELDERS DESIGNATE NEW MISSIONS

EDITOR'S NOTE:

At its June meeting, the Board of Elders approved the request for Mission status of five MCC groups: MCC Louisville, KY; MCC San Antonio, TX; MCC Milwaukee, WI; MCC Edmonton, Canada and All Saints MCC (West Hollywood, CA).

Three of the new Missions submitted articles on their respective groups. Look for profiles on the other new Missions in future issues of In Unity.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Not only is Louisville the home of the Kentucky Derby, but since September 25, 1977, it has been the site of an MCC group.

The group consists of 35-40 persons worshipping together at the First Unitarian Church on Sunday evenings. One unique aspect of this new Mission is that it has nine church organists, so they are never without good music.

The congregation has received a great deal of media coverage in the past few months. They participated in a television series on Good Gay Life, in which parts of the worship service were aired on the evening news. They have also had several very objective articles written about the church in the local newspapers. All of these have helped the group to grow in attendance as well as build community support and understanding.

The congregation elected the Rev. Anne Keast and the Rev. Sandy Taylor as Interim Co-Pastors on June 25, 1978. They served the congregation of MCC Detroit, MI, prior to accepting the call to Louisville. †

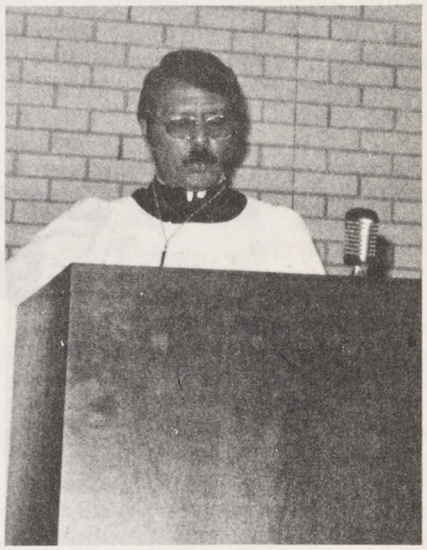
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Mr. Jim Lewey, Worship Coordinator for MCC San Antonio, reports that the group has grown tremendously since his arrival in that city in April. The congregation has instituted a publications committee, and they hope to begin production of a newsletter by late July. A Deacon's fund has been initiated, and is growing steadily. The group now has a church bookstore, which is very successful, and is already self-supporting. A ministry to non-hearing people has also been very successful -- the group has five non-hearing persons attending regularly, and a member of the congregation signs at each service. This person will soon begin classes for anyone interested in learning to sign.

One of the best things which has happened to the new Mission is the coverage given them by the local news media. On June 4, 1978, a crew from the "Eyewitness News Team" of KENS-TV arrived at the church, taped an interview with Mr. Lewey, and filmed part of the service. Jim advises that they were treated very fairly by the News team, and that the results of the broadcast are still being felt. Of all the calls received by the church after the coverage, only one was negative.

MCC San Antonio has an average attendance of 35 weekly, with an active membership of 29.

Jim Lewey is an Exhorter, licensed through MCC St. Louis, MO. He assumed the duties of Worship Coordinator for MCC San Antonio after the resignation of the Rev. Judy Davenport, who had accepted the call to be the Pastor of MCC Oklahoma City, OK. In response to the question "What's going on in San Antonio?", Jim replied: "When I think of what is happening, I am overwhelmed. It has got to be the work of the Holy Spirit, because I don't have this kind of ability." †



Exhorter Mr. James Lewey, Worship Coordinator of MCC San Antonio photographed during a recent broadcast of the local 'Eye Witness News Team'.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

The Rev. Ken Taylor was elected Interim Pastor on June 25, by the congregation of MCC Milwaukee,one of the new Missions in the UFMCC. The former Pastor of MCC London, the Rev. Taylor came to Milwaukee in late May.

The Rev. Taylor advises that, like most of our churches, MCC Milwaukee has not been without its problems, but the people have stuck together, believing that the Lord has called them out for a special task.

The new Mission has begun an evangelistic outreach, and although they do not have the space to seat any new 'converts', they trust that the Lord will take care of this detail.

The Rev. Taylor spends a good deal of time in the 'crusing' areas of Milwaukee, talking to gays, and this has evoked a very positive response from the community regarding the church. In the very near future, members will be going out into the bars and baths as witnesses of Christ.

At the present time, MCC Milwaukee does not conduct a Bible Study or have a telephone ministry, but the Rev. Taylor indicates that this is a major priority for the future. The group presently has a Deacon Candidate and an Exhorter Candidate, who are preparing and training for the time when MCC Milwaukee becomes a chartered church.

Of the work at MCC Milwaukee, the Rev. Taylor commented: "We have a long way to go, but we are on the move." †

SAMARITAN HOLDS CLASS ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

by Roger Webb

"The Johannine Gospel" was the subject of a week-long intensive course offered by Samaritan Theological Institute, June 11-16, at a private camp in Bear Valley Springs, California. The secluded mountain setting proved very conducive to this concentrated study of the Fourth Gospel. The instructor was the Rev. Jeffrey Pulling, Dean of STI, and the class consisted of five students: Fred Conwell (MCC in the Valley), Philip Harry (MCC-LA), Kay Palin (Casa de Cristo MCC, Phoenix), the Rev. Virgil Scott (MCC Ventura), and Roger Webb (All Saints MCC). The cook for the week-long study was Josie Barnard from Casa de Cristo MCC, Phoenix, AZ.

Each of the students was required to give exegetical presentations on certain passages and to deliver an oral report on their research project for the week. The group met six hours in class every day to complete the study of the entire Gospel according to John.

Rev. Pulling is willing to teach this intensive course elsewhere in the Fellowship. If any group of exhorters and/or clergy is interested, please contact him at the STI offices, POB 5570, Los Angeles, CA, 90055.

Participants in the class on the Gospel of John: (back row, l-r) Phil Harry, The Rev. Virgil Scott, Fred Conwell. (Middle) Roger Webb, Kay Palin. (Front) The Rev. Jeff Pulling, Dean of STI.

Samaritan Theological Institute's Dean, the Rev. Jeffrey Pulling, states: "We wanted students to be able to completely concentrate on a subject without distractions. Thus, STI developed the concept of a five day educational retreat held up in the mountains."

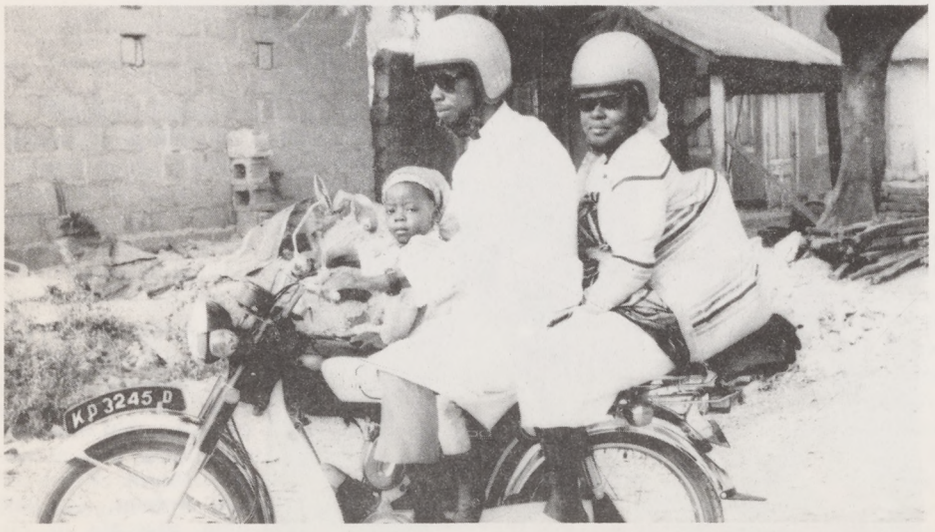
As one of the students at this seminar, I felt STI accomplished its goal. We arrived Sunday evening at the cabin and immediately began our study with three audio-visual presentations reviewing the Synoptics as a comparative background for the Gospel of John. By Friday, the students had received 28 hours of lectures, presented two exegeses on various chapters of John, and gave a twenty minute oral report on a Johannine theme.

In addition to the lectures, research, and reports, each student was responsible for a worship hour in which (s)he presented a homily from the Gospel of John. Each day began and ended with a worship service. The final exam was administered on Friday.

Re-entry into the world after all this Johannine environment was most unsuual. Complete immersion in John's mystical/theological drama and the historical realism of Palestine 2000 years ago was our world for five days. It was as if one had entered a time machine, to be crudely brought back by the onslaught of the Los Angeles urban sprawl, and all that the present-day level of disharmony can bring. There was a good lesson in this re-entry experience. It showed me how important it is to return again and again to scriptural insight. Not as a means to escape the realities of this life, but to allow scripture to provide the guidance in dealing with the day to day routine of our lives.

A special thanks goes to Peter and Steve, who loaned us their mountain home for the week. And to Josie, whose cooking resulted in weight gains for some of us – thanks!

For those who recognize the need to understand the Gospel of John for a more complete Christian education and consciousness, this seminar is a must. †



The Rev. Sylvanus Maduka , with his wife and two children, returning from a call to a member's home. (One child is hidden, being carried on the mother's back.)

NIGERIA

Due to the persecution and murder of Christians by the Moslems in Nigeria, the Rev. Sylvanus Maduka has moved his family to Ezinachi - Imo State where he has started a study group. In addition, he has started study groups in Okigwi and Umu-Awa Ogee. While he returns periodically to Zaria, Maduka felt the move was necessary in order to minister to the poor people in the Imo State, for they have been the ones most adversely affected by the violence and persecution in the country.

Maduka reports that he is being aided by a former Methodist minister in these new works, and that he is planning toward the establishment of a training school for adults and children. He would like to establish a maternity clinic for the women in the area because they must travel 85 miles one way to receive medical care each week. †

SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA

The Rev. Jim Dykes and the congregation of MCC West Bay shared in worship with their host church, Unitarian Community Church, on July 9 in Santa Monica.

The Rev. Dykes and the Rev. Elder Carol Cureton joined with Unitarian Minister Ernie Pipes and his assistant, Ms. Maren Hansen, to present "A Response to the Briggs Initiative", in an effort to educate the congregations on the ramifications of growing discriminatory attitudes in America.

The response to the joint worship was enthusiastic, with members of both groups pledging to work for the defeat of such oppressive legislation.

MCC West Bay still awaits the decision of the Westside Ecumenical Council regarding their application for membership. The Rev. Dykes advises that he expects a decision in September, and is optimistic about the outcome.

The Rev. Jim Dykes and his spouse, Dr. Lanny Dykes are hearing the "pitter-patter" of little feet around their home these days, coming from the newest addition to the Dykes' clan, 16-month old Robert David Dykes. Lanny is Robert's adoptive father (a single parent adoption), and Jim will request legal guardianship, after the completion of an investigation by Los Angeles Adoptive Services. †

PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

The Lord does move in strange ways, but the UFMCC is ready, with open hearts, to accept all that God proclaims. So it is in our newest Feasibility Study Group in Palm Springs, CA.

In twelve short weeks, over forty people have assembled to worship the Lord under the leadership of the Rev. Debbie Gendron, Worship Coordinator. Many of these people are strongly supportive of the work God has begun.

The group has already sponsored a weekend retreat, held in the high desert of Yucca Valley, at the home of George and Lloyd. Twenty people attended, and learned how to defend themselves against snakes, when hiking; how to care for orphaned turtles; and how to work a player piano. Everyone went home full of the spirit, high on the Lord and fresh air, knowledgeable about wild life, and very hoarse from all the singing.

Meeting space has been provided for the last twelve weeks, free of charge (unheard of in Palm Springs) by the Santa Fe Federal Savings and Loan Association, who also donates coffee and tea for after services.

God is really blessing this new group of enthusiastic people. Services are Sunday, 7 pm, at 300 S. Palm Canyon Road in Palm Springs.

The mailing address for the new MCC work is POB 920, Cathedral City, CA, 92334. †

FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

July 9 began like any other Sunday for the Rev. Steve Quesnel, Worship Coordinator of MCC Fresno, CA. On his way home from work, he stopped to check on arrangements for the church's rummage sale that day, and ran a few other errands – unaware that this delay may have saved his life.

MCC Fresno has no offices for counseling or meetings, so the Rev. Quesnel has been housing them in his apartment. Randy, a congregational member, was at the apartment, when a black man came to the door Sunday morning, asking to see the pastor.

When he was informed that the pastor had not yet returned home from work, tha man left, returning approximately ten minutes later, requesting to use the phone.

Randy directed the man to the telephone, and went into the kitchen. During this time, the man opened the door for an accomplice, and they too went into the kitchen, where they forced Randy, at gunpoint, to strip and lie face down on the floor, covering him with a bed sheet.

They demolished Rev. Quesnel's stereo, threw it into the bathtub, and drenched it. The black men then tore the church phone from the wall, and took the church's electric typewriter as they exited.

A few days later, the Rev. Quesnel received a phone call in which someone in the background stated "Tell that (expletive) we'll get him next time."

Quesnel thinks that one of the men is a young man he had counseled ten days prior to the incident."I came down pretty hard on him regarding promiscuity," he said.

Police believe the incident is more a case of malicious mischief, but due to the usage of a weapon, are investigating it as an armed robbery.

Pastor Quesnel was advised by police to change residence, and the congregation has demanded the same. The church is now seeking office space so that Quesnel no longer counsels in his home.

But the moves have places Quesnel in a financial bind, because he had tendered his resignation of his secular job prior to the incident, in order to devote his full efforts to MCC Fresno.

Regarding the incident, Quesnel commented:

"It looks like the beginning of a long hot summer and fall in Fresno. I hate to be put in a position where I have to run . . . eleven years ago I gave my life and will over to God, and I'm not afraid."

Anyone interested in helping with the Rev. Quesnel's resettling may contact him at the following address:

MCC Fresno
POB 12203
Fresno, CA 93776 †

MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA

A New Metropolitan Community Church gathered for worship the first time on Sunday, June 25, Gay Pride Day, 1978. Coordinator of the new congregation, which will request Study Group Status in July, is the Rev. Joseph Gilbert, District Coordinator of the Southeast District of the UFMCC. The group has located quarters at 401 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, and is called Emmaus Metropolitan Community Church. Service is Sunday morning at 10:30 AM. Pot luck suppers are held on Mondays at 7:30 PM. †

Present for the first service of worship were The Rev. Joseph Gilbert (lf) and The Rev. Lucia Chappelle (rt). Not pictured but present was Mr. Morris Kight of Los Angeles, Ca, long time advocate of human rights.

COLUMBUS, OHIO

BY J.D. BAUGHMAN

Gina likened the Metropolitan Community Church to a dandelion. My reaction was one of surprise. After all, a dandelion is a weed, damned by all in whose yard it grows. Its roots are impossibly deep, it defies weed killers, and it grows anywhere it finds even the smallest amount of nourishment.

Then again, I thought, as children we picked the pretty yellow flowers for mother, grandmother, neighbor woman, and teacher. These "weeds" were placed ever so carefully and gratefully in vases of water. We also then believed that by placing these "weeds" under the dirty chins of our playmates, we would know if our friends liked butter.

Now we know that the dandelion leaves make a tasty salad and that the flower makes an excellent wine indeed. In early summer, the greening fields are beautifully complemented with the golden flowers. Later, when the flowers have gone to seed, and the wind catches these seeds, they float to other lawns and fields, and stubbornly, against all odds, grow.

The story of the dandelion is the story of the Metropolitan Community Church. From the first flower in Los Angeles, the seeds have blown across the nation to Columbus, Ohio. The Board of Home Missions of the Great Lakes District declared MCC Columbus a Study Group on May 5, 1978. On May 28, 1978, in a special service for the installation of a new congregation, MCC Columbus introduced eight new members into the UFMCC and baptized five of them. Rev. Howard Gaass, pastor of MCC Cincinnati, presided over the baptism of the new members and preached the sermon. Exhorter Jane Carl, Worship Coordinator for the new Study Group, presented the memberships. The Rev. Joe Sprague, pastor of the Summit United Methodist Church, joined us in our worship service by reading the Scripture and offering the benediction. The service was solemn in our vows to the Lord. We had all worked arduously, and had been anxious and impatient. We had struggled for God's church for all people, and suddenly we had broken through to the light. We wept for the pure joy of the moment.

If you are ever in Columbus, come worship with us, Sunday at 2 pm, at the Summit United Methodist Church on the corner of 12th and Indianola Ave. †

New members of MCC Columbus, Ohio: (Back row, left to right) Exhorter Jane Carl, Terri Tucker, Sharon Coleman, Gloria Root, J.D. Baughman. (Front row) Gina Lee, Linda Clarke, Kathy Lowe. Not pictured : Jim Cooper.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

The Rev. Chuck Larsen and the congregation of MCC-SF have been instrumental in the establishment and maintenance of some major outreach programs for their community.

One such program, which has been functioning at the church for two years, is the Senior Citizen Luncheon Program. Funds are raised primarily by gay bars in the city, and these efforts are led by Tenderloin Tessie, a male bartender in the community. So far Tessie has raised over $3,000, and this money has provided over 2,000 meals, and four full-day field trips for over 500 seniors. Members of MCC-SF help in the fund-raising and also in preparing and serving the monthly dinner at the church the last Tuesday of each month. As a result of this outreach, a number of the senior citizens, most of whom are non-gays, are attending worship services regularly at MCC-SF.

As a result of the beating of one of the church members, Pastor Larsen set up the first of a series of dialogues between the gay community and the local police. One very positive aspect of this dialogue is that the Rev. Larsen has been allowed to review training materials and personal evaluation sheets filled out by that city's police recruits. As a result, evaluations of the individual recruit's attitudes toward gays have been included in the training process. Larsen and other members have volunteered to be resource people for the field training experiences of recruits, to help educate them about the gay community.

The Rev. Larsen states that his position as a member of the Empress Char's Royal Court has begun "to erase the feeling in our community that MCC was too good to be involved in the court system." Through involvement in the court system, MCC-SF is now included in a number of fund raising activities. But the major benefit, according to Larsen, is that "MCC-SF is now acknowledged as a part of the gay community at large, and people realize that we do care and cooperate."

†

THAMES VALLEY, ENGLAND

World Church Extension Officer, the Rev. Jose von Buhler, and MCC Thames Valley Co-Pastor, the Rev. Art Ramirez sponsored the first ministerial conference ever held in England, on May 27. Workshops were conducted in MCC Polity, UFMCC government and recommended operating procedures, standardization of exhorter training, and the progress of all the MCC groups in Great Britain was also discussed.

Plans for the coming months include a series of spiritual retreats, to be conducted in Birmingham, Thames Valley, and London. Also planned are anniversary celebrations at the congregations in Birmingham (July 29, third anniversary), Thames Valley (Sept. 2-3, first anniversary), and London (Oct. 7-8, sixth anniversary).

The Rev. Ramirez reports that five new MCC works have been started in England in the past six months, with the possibility of beginning five more in the near future. Ramirez further indicates that the UFMCC has a very positive contact in Hamburg, Germany, also.

The Rev. Ramirez advises that the churches in England are in need of old hymnals, Bibles, candles, choir music, any types of religious magazines, and MCC jewelry. They would also appreciate receiving church newsletters, to help them keep in touch with MCC affairs. If you would like to help, contact:

The Rev. Jose von Buhler
World Church Extension Officer
Flat 1, "Elmwood",
Branksomewood Road
Fleet, Hants, England

†

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

July 16, 1978 was officially cited as "Rev. F. J. Deacon Day" in Hartford, set forth in a proclamation by that city's mayor, George A. Athanson.

Cited as a "voice of responsibility and maturity, calling for understanding through education, tolerance, and goodwill, between the homosexual and non-homosexual community in Hartford", the Rev. Deacon founded the Hartford MCC in 1973.

The Rev. Deacon has resigned the Hartford pulpit, and will assume the pastorate of Good Shepherd Parish MCC, Chicago, IL, in August. †

MINISTERIAL CHANGES

Ayers, the Rev. John: from Interim Pastor, MCC Sarasota, FL to: available for call.

Fleschner, the Rev. Arthur: from Interim Pastor, King of Peace MCC, St. Petersburg, FL to: staff, MCC Tampa, FL.

Gauer, the Rev. Lawrence: from staff, MCC Toronto, Canada to: Co-Pastor, MCC Toronto, Canada (with the Rev. Robert Wolfe).

Gilbert, the Rev. Joseph: from Pastor, MCC Miami, FL to: Worship Coordinator, Emmaus MCC, Miami Beach, FL.

Kliebenstein, the Rev. Susan: from Co-Worship Coordinator, MCC Pensacola, FL to: Co-Pastor, King of Peace MCC, St. Petersburg, FL.

Landre, the Rev. Jonathon: resigned from the ministry.

Monti, the Rev. JoAnne: from Pastor, MCC Montreal, Canada to: Pastor, MCC Boulder, CO.

Taylor, the Rev. Kenneth: from Worship Coordinator, MCC Greensboro, NC to: Interim Pastor, MCC Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Taylor, the Rev. William: from Pastor, MCC Albuquerque, NM to: available for call.

ERA Supporters March in D.C. But Where Was MCC?

by the Rev. Flo Fleischman

At eleven in the morning, July 9, we assembled in the 97 degree heat, for the greatest feminist march in history. The participants numbered well over one hundred thousand, marching in support of the ERA Extension.

Earlier that morning, I had made the rounds of the many delegations, organizations, and religious groups in attendance. Some of the religious groups included: Bnai Brith, Methodist Women, Mormon Women For The ERA, Pro God, and many other churches were represented.

But where was MCC? I searched for over an hour going from delegation to delegation asking about MCC. The women's group from Florida had heard of MCC in Tampa. But our banner was not there.

As I marched that hot, muggy day, I tried to concentrate on various thoughts to keep me going. Because California groups were at the last of the groupings, we stood over three hours in the sun waiting to do our thing, and many people were already suffering from the heat and humidity. So I thought of God and my Church. Where was my Church? I was so proud to represent LA that morning, but I would have been more proud had I marched in an MCC delegation.

As we moved along Pennsylvania Avenue, my thoughts returned to the church. We are probably the number one Church in the Christian community for producing and educating women ministers. We have been rejected by society, and called an abomination of God. We are the most hated minority, yet when equal rights are at stake, such as the ERA extension, where were we?

At this moment the equal rights of gays are at stake in California, via John Briggs. We, more than any other minority, should know what it is, not to have the same rights as others. Yet where were the ERA supporters from MCC that morning?

After the parade I visited MCC Washington, D.C., and received a hearty welcome from Kerry Brown, formerly of MCC-LA. She informed me that some of the members had been participants, but not as an MCC, only as part of a delegation from another organization.

Thanks to the ability and know-how of the National Organization for (organizers of the march), the march was a success. The following day I became a lobbyist, and visited several Congress persons. I witnessed as much and as often as I could about the UFMCC. I was proud to talk about my Church, but it would have been so wonderful to have pointed out my Church among all those delegations that Sunday morning, when women, men, and even children stood under the banner of Sisterhood and trudged that hard road for equal rights.

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST *continued from page 10*

resolution from Kokomo, Indiana which would have made Christians and homosexuals mutually exclusive categories.

The ordination issue is much more of a family affair. While Disciples may now with a clear conscience fight to the death for the rights of avowed homosexuals to exist in America, they still are not sure if they want to have them representing God and the Holy Bible on Sunday mornings in the pulpit at Kokomo or Shelbyville. It is a fair guess that the Disciples will never go down absolutely against the ordination of gays. It isn't in their open, creedless nature to do so. But it is also unlikely that they will in the near future take affirmative steps to ease the way for gays into ministry.

No heavy hermeneutical discussions dominated this body. The Bible either says this or it says that. Interestingly enough, social science literature also entered the debates. One young man from Texas Christian University argued for the study document since he was convinced from "research" that homosexual persons could not be changed, and even if he didn't like homosexuals and what they did, it was important to accept them. A local pastor from California, who asserted he was a "psychotherapist" (a title typically reserved for medical professionals who have undertaken psychoanalysis and psychiatric training) declared that the research indicated that homosexuals persons could be changed if they only tried hard enough. Then another minister argued, citing former American Psychological Association president Donald Campbell that social and cultural evolution over long periods of time had resulted in survival-oriented adaptations which we must not easily discard, and taboos against homosexuality as part of this evolutionary process needed to be upheld. As in other cases, people voted for what they believed, not what the social science research indicated. They voted for what they believed the Scripture said, not in some esoteric interpretation of biblical passages.

One of the most poignant events of the entire conference was a mother reading a letter from her homosexual son. She ran out of time before she could finish the letter and was given a standing ovation by the assembly. She was allowed to complete the reading of the letter. Perhaps if the delegates listened to anyone during the debates, they listened to this woman, who at times cried, even though this letter had been written by her son in 1971 (and has been circulated in church circles since then). The issues had come home, they had become real. After all, like sexuality we learn about homosexuality as a private experience – from the experiences and development of ourselves and our closest friends.

After the homosexuality resolutions had passed, the conference seemed to loosen up, partially out of fatigue, and partially because after that kind of intensity, who could get riled about recognizing the People's Republic of China, giving the Panama Canal to the Panamanians, and supporting Farm Workers? The climax of the conference was on Monday; after that, it was boredom and breaking away.

The question which continues to preoccupy us was, given the character of the Disciples, how did such a positive vote occur regarding the resolutions dealing with homosexuality? Is there a message to be read regarding popular opinion on these issues? True, a more liberal body of people, as in the other denominations, is represented at these national conventions, but these are not your average liberals – affluent, professional, and above day-to-day experience and brushing with violence, poverty, and race. More than the average liberal, more precisely the stereotypical liberal, the people come from moderate income and middle-class backgrounds. They live, for the most part, in communities where liberal sentiments are not the norm. Who are the people then? Why did they vote this way? How many of them have known a homosexual person?

It was significant that no gay caucus organized for the Assembly. In fact, no openly gay person spoke on any of the issues. There have been one or two instances in recent years in which people in the Christian Church have lost jobs or been denied ministerial status because of their sexual preference. Little organized opposition to these decisions has surfaces. Given all of this quiescence, the significance of the votes has to be in doubt. In the fall of 1979, the ordination issue will return in some form to the General Assembly. That is two years for the conservatives to organize, for the liberals to maneuver, and for gay Disciples to consider their situation. The real confrontation may be yet to come. Meanwhile, it is time to be thankful for little things like civil rights resolutions and study documents, and being back in California – and out of the Holiday Inn. †

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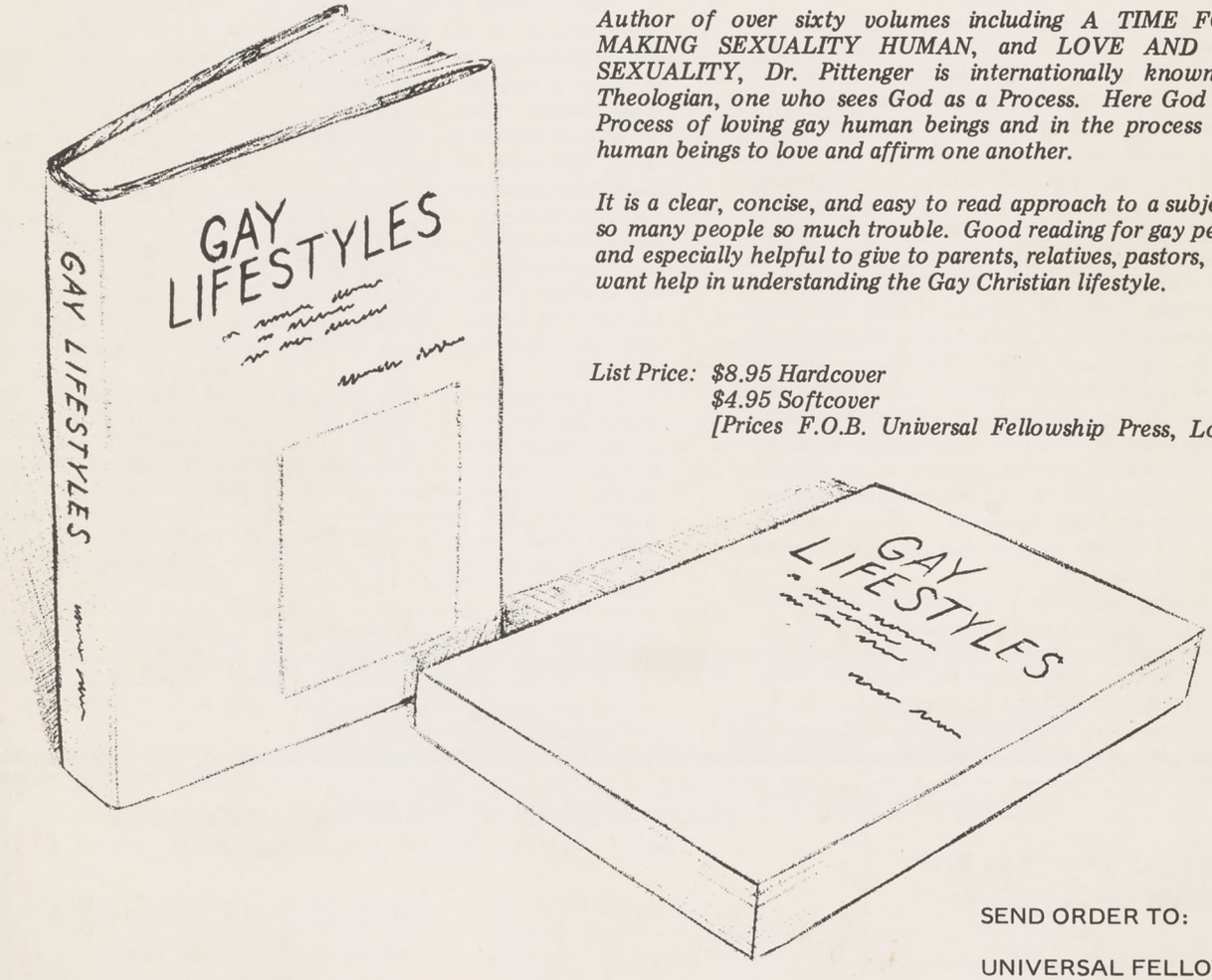

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